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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BEIJING 001023

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GM, JA, UK

SUBJECT: BEIJING-BASED G-5 CHIEFS OF MISSION ON JAPAN,
GOVERNMENT REORG, GERMANY, AIRPORT SECURITY

Classified By: Ambassador Clark T. Randt, Jr. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

1. (C) At the March 14 bi-weekly Beijing-based G-5 Chiefs of Mission gathering, Japanese DCM Kunio Umeda said that PRC President Hu Jintao's trip to Japan is scheduled for May 6, but the poisoned dumpling issue could make the visit "difficult." Participants were unimpressed by the National People's Congress's recently announced restructuring of the government. UK DCM Barbara Woodward said that if the proposal should fail, blame will probably fall on newly selected Politburo Standing Committee member Li Keqiang. Participants said that ongoing government changes make scheduling visits difficult. German DCM Aristide Fenster described the improvement of Germany's relationship with the PRC since Chancellor Merkel's September 2007 meeting with the Dalai Lama. End Summary.

Participants

2. (C) The Ambassadr hosted French Ambassador Herve Ladsous, German DCM Aristide Fenster, Japanese DCM Kunio Umeda and British DCM Barbara Woodward March 14 for the bi-weekly G-5 gathering of Beijing-based Chiefs of Mission.

Hu Jintao Japan Trip Set, Dumplings May Poison It

3. (C) Japanese DCM Umeda reported that PRC President Hu Jintao will travel to Japan on May 6 and stay for four nights. FM Yang Jiechi is scheduled to be in Japan April 14-17 to prepare for the visit. Umeda said that the issue of the poisoned dumplings is "overshadowing" the two countries' bilateral relations. PM Fukuda has instructed Japanese authorities to cooperate with China and is concerned that public backlash over the dumpling issue in Japan could make Hu's visit difficult. Umeda reported that he has been to the Ministry of Public Security twice to discuss the case, but that there has been no substantial progress. China is sending investigators to Japan, which will be followed by a trip by Japan's investigators to China. Umeda commented that it "looks like China wants to find a way out."

Government Reorganization at the NPC

4. (C) Participants said they were unimpressed by the planned

government restructuring. Japanese DCM Umeda said there is history to consider and the personalities of those in charge will greatly influence what will be a very gradual process. UK DCM Woodward speculated that if the reorganization turns out to be insignificant, recently promoted Politburo Standing Committee member Li Keqiang, who heads the reorganization effort, would fail his first test. Such a failure would indicate that he does not have the power necessary to streamline the government and would hurt him politically.

German High-Level Visits Reflect Thaw

15. (C) German DCM Fenster reported several upcoming high-level visits, which reflect an improvement in relations since the downturn following German Chancellor Merkel's meeting with the Dalai Lama in September 2007. Minister of the Interior Wolfgang Schaueble will visit April 28-29 and will also be in Beijing for the Olympics, along with Federal President Horst Kohler. Chancellor Merkel has not decided whether she will attend the Games, but will attend the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in Beijing in October. Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Yesui will travel to Berlin April 14 for the Sino-German Strategic Dialogue. Fenster said that Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier will visit China June 12-14 and Minister for Economics and Technology Michael Glos will travel to Beijing and Shanghai April 13-18. The two sides are scheduled to hold a human rights dialogue in Munich on March 22. Finally, Germany will launch a German-Chinese cooperative program to provide vocational training in Chongqing. Chongqing Party Secretary Bo Xilai is reportedly happy about the training because it aids Chongqing's rural population.

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French Polls Complicate Visits

16. (C) French Ambassador Herve Ladsous said local elections in France are complicating plans for upcoming visits because there may be personnel "adjustments" after the vote. For the time being, Minister of Culture Christine Albanel is still planning to visit April 3, and Secretary of State for European Affairs Jean-Pierre Jouyet will visit April 18-19. Secretary General for Defense M. Francis Delon is expected to

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discuss strategic planning with the PRC Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs during a visit in early April. Former French Presidents Valery Giscard d'Estaing and Jacques Chirac and former Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin will visit China the week of April 21. Chirac is expected to give a speech on global issues and the preservation of cultural identity. Ambassador Ladsous said that Chirac's first major speech since leaving office will be "important." French Minister of Finance Christine Lagarde will come to China for an economic dialogue in May, and in June Diplomatic Advisor to the President Jean-David Levitte will arrive for a strategic dialogue, Ladsous said. The dialogue's working groups are expected to cover the UN, Africa, Latin America, strategic affairs and terrorism.

UK Visits

17. (C) Former PM Tony Blair will travel to China to discuss climate change with Premier Wen Jiabao; however, it is still unclear if the National Development and Reform Commission will take the lead or if responsibility will pass to the new Environmental Protection Ministry. DCM Woodward believes that the PRC counterpart for Chancellor of the Exchequer Alistair Darling's April Economic Dialogue will be newly-selected Vice Premier Wang Qishan, but that is not yet confirmed. The dialogue is expected to cover trade, development and financial services, among other topics. UK

Foreign Minister Miliband was "so taken with China" after his trip that he is encouraging more high-level UK officials to visit, including a planned trip of the UK Ambassadors to other P-5 nations at the end of April, Woodward said.

Counterterrorism and Kerosene

¶18. (C) The participants lamented the lack of information on a recent alleged terrorist incident in Gansu Province in which a young ethnic Uighur woman is reported to have tried to cause an explosion on an airplane with a bottle of kerosene. UK DCM Woodward said that on March 13 a Sichuanese entertainer hired by a British company arrived at London's Heathrow airport from China. Before leaving the airport he asked his hosts if they would like to see his flame throwing act, at which point he produced a bottle of kerosene from his suitcase. The story has been a caused renewed concern for transportation authorities in the UK.

Health Issues

¶19. (C) Japanese DCM Umeda said that he understood that (with the exception of one case) the PRC Ministry of Health does not check for avian influenza infection until after a patient has died. (NOTE: Post's CDC Resident Advisor reports that due to financial concerns and the unspecific early symptoms, patients in China are not usually tested for avian influenza until the symptoms are quite severe and that the patient often does not survive the lengthy testing and confirmation process, thus leading to the possible conclusion that a diagnosis prior to death is rare.) A doctor at the HKU-Pasteur Research Center in Hong Kong reported to Ambassador Ladsous that he does not believe that the current outbreak in Hong Kong of what he called the "Brisbane" flu is dangerous.

Olympics Hotline

¶10. (C) UK DCM Woodward mentioned that during recent consular discussions with China on a "hotline" for the Olympics, it became apparent that the "hotline" is currently nothing more than "one man on a cell phone."

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Diplomatic Moves

¶11. (C) German DCM Fenster announced that he has been nominated to be Germany's new ambassador to Afghanistan. Cameroon's ambassador to the PRC, Eleih-elle Etian, who has served at his post for well over twenty years, will be leaving soon and will be replaced by a former Minister of External Relations.
RANDT